CLAIMS

1. A mail preparation system, including:
a postage charge dispenser configured to generate postage indicia and account for postage charges;
a printer operable to print the postage indicia as generated by the postage charge dispenser on mail items;
a display;
a controller for driving the display to display a depiction of a postage indicium to be printed on a mail item, the depicted postage indicium including a plurality of data items modifiable by a user, which data items include at least one data item related to postage charge, and being operable to provide data representative of the data items to the postage charge dispenser;
a data item selector operable by the user to select any one of the data items in the depicted postage indicium and cause the controller to drive the display to display a plurality of possible item entries for the selected data item; and
an item entry selector operable by the user to select one of the possible item entries for the selected data item and cause the controller to drive the display to display a modified depiction of the postage indicium including the selected item entry for the data item.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the data item selector comprises a screen pointing device.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the screen pointing device comprises one of a mouse, a tracker ball, a touch pad or a touch screen.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the item entry selector comprises a screen pointing device.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the screen pointing device comprises one of a mouse, a tracker ball, a touch pad or a touch screen.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the possible item entries for the selected data item are superimposed on the depiction of the postage indicium.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the data items include postage value.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the data items include postage class.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the data items include date.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the data items include destination.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the destinations are represented on a map.

12. The system of claim 1, further including:
a weighscale for determining the weight of mail items, the weighscale being operable to provide data representative of the weight of a mail item to the controller and the controller being configured automatically to select the postage value for the mail item.

13. A method of preparing mail items, including the steps of:
displaying a depiction of a postage indicium to be printed on a mail item, the depicted postage indicium including a plurality of data items modifiable by a user, which data items include at least one data item related to postage charge;
selecting one of the data items in the depicted postage indicium to be modified;
displaying a plurality of possible item entries for the selected data item;
selecting one of the possible item entries for the selected data item;
displaying a modified depiction of the postage indicium including the selected item entry for the data item;
generating a postage indicium corresponding to the modified depiction of the postage indicium; and
printing the postage indicium on a mail item.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the possible item entries for the selected data

item are superimposed on the depiction of the postage indicium.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the data items include postage value.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the data items include postage class.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the data items include date.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the data items include destination.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the destinations are represented on a map.

20. The method of claim 13, further including the step of:
weighing the mail item, whereby the weight of the mail item is utilised automatically to select the postage value for the mail item.

21. A mail preparation system for preparing batches of mail, the system including:
a message transmitter operable to transmit messages relating to batches of mail to a remote data center;
a message receiver for receiving messages from the remote data center as an acknowledgement in reply to each transmitted message;
a display for displaying message areas corresponding to each transmitted message; and
a controller for operating the display to display the message areas with a first visual appearance on transmission of the respective messages to the remote data center and a second, different visual appearance on receipt of the respective messages from the remote data center.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the controller includes a time-out function for displaying message areas with a third, different visual appearance where a message is not received from the remote data center within a predetermined period of time following transmission of the message to the remote data center.

23. The system of claim 21, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different colours.

24. The system of claim 21, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different shades.

25. The system of claim 21, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different patterns.

26. The system of claim 21, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different characters.

27. A method of preparing batches of mail, the method including the steps of:
transmitting messages relating to batches of mail to a remote data center;
receiving messages from the remote data center as an acknowledgement in reply to the transmitted messages; and
displaying message areas on a display corresponding to each transmitted message, the message areas being displayed with a first visual appearance on transmission of the respective messages to the remote data center and a second, different visual appearance on receipt of the respective messages from the remote data center.

28. The method of claim 27, further including the step of:
displaying message areas with a third, different visual appearance where a message is not received from the remote data center within a predetermined period of time following transmission of the message to the remote data center.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different colours.

30. The method of claim 27, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different shades.

31. The method of claim 27, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different patterns.

32. The method of claim 27, wherein the different visual appearances are represented by different characters.